

# AMERICAN SCHOOLS OF ORIENTAL RESEARCH

## JERUSALEM AND BAGHDAD

### ARCHAEOLOGICAL NEWSLETTER

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The Newsletter is a little late this time due to the fact that the first of the month came in the middle of the week and I was down in Dhiban. I had good intentions of writing the letter down there, and it would have been nice to have a Dhiban date-line, but there was just not the time in the evenings, as you will see. But it is best to keep the letters chronological and as I promised last month to say something of our Eastertide in Jerusalem in this letter I had better bring you up-to-date on that first.

As you may not have realized, the western Easter (celebrated by the Latin church and our Protestant groups) and the eastern Easter (celebrated by the Greek Orthodox, Coptic, Abyssinian, Syrian, Armenian and other groups) coincided this year. This meant that the press of people in Jerusalem was not spread out over two separate occasions but was concentrated on one Palm Sunday, one Passion week, and one Easter. Jerusalem was extremely crowded and it was often difficult to obtain tickets to attend some of the services but I think our School people did quite well by themselves. You may think it rather strange, and even rather unreligious to issue tickets for religious services, but the fact is that there is no alternative. It is only fair that the communicants of the several churches should have priority to attend their own services in their own churches and holy places over strangers from outside. When they are taken care of, there is always the group of honoured guests from the Jordan government, foreign powers, the United Nations personnel, municipal officials etc. The ordinary tourist or even pilgrim comes last in the list, but if he be a westerner he receives preferential treatment. This seems hardly fair but we accept it as evidence of the extraordinary courtesy and thoughtfulness of our good friends in this country.

As a matter of fact, I myself did not attend one service this Eastertide. I had wanted to attend the Abyssinian service of the Search for the Body of Christ which is held on the roof of the Holy Sepulchre and which I have never seen, but at the last minute I was unable to go. But others of our group attended and reported that it was a most interesting and unusual rite. Then there was the ritual of Foot-Washing carried out by the Greek Orthodox group and by the Armenians. The Holy Fire ceremony in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre was one of those occasions which I remember very well from previous years. The building up of enthusiasm, excitement and expectancy in the domed rotunda which surrounds the aedicule containing the empty tomb itself, as the crowd awaits the awful moment when the fire representing the descent of the Holy Spirit is miraculously kindled and passed out through the openings in the side of the aedicule - such a crescendo gradually affects the onlooker to whom the whole rite is exotic until he too becomes excited and emotionally moved. The ceremony of the Descent from the Cross in which is re-enacted the passion story from the claiming of Jesus' body by Joseph of Arimathea to the anointing and final deposit in the tomb is one of the most colourful of the Latin rites. Many of our people took part in the Palm Sunday procession from Bethany over the Mount of Olives, into St. Stephen's Gate and along the Via Dolorosa to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. It is very difficult to convey to those of you who have not

been in the Holy Land at one of the big religious seasons the fervour, the excitement and the true religious feeling which attends. In many ways we westerners are outside of the tradition which expresses its belief and hope in such symbolic acts. We tend to be rationalists and to look with curious eyes, if not frank disapproval, on such rituals. But if we fail to grasp the difference in our approach to religion from this other approach which is much more immediate, unreasoned, and none-the-less honest and sincere, we can never appreciate the true piety which is thus expressed. Nor can we comprehend a large part of man's religious experience from the very beginning, and from this vantage point criticize our own conception of religion and its embodiments. A superficial observation will show us only the forms and perhaps even the excesses but cannot make clear to us what these forms try to express. A good example of this can be given. Most tourists who come to Jerusalem take an immediate dislike to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, not only because it is falling to pieces with age, but because in it take place all manner of ceremonies which they do not attempt to understand and which they immediately decide can be of no meaning to anyone else. They then jump to the conclusion - an absolute non sequitur - that such a place cannot contain the authentic tomb of Christ and it must be somewhere else. Their choice of the right spot - again a non sequitur - usually falls on the so-called Garden Tomb, lying to the north of the city outside the Damascus Gate and associated with the so-called Gordon's Calvary. In other words, a religious misapprehension leads to an historical and topographical judgment which is hardly borne out by what evidence is at hand. This one example is given because it is a perennial topic of conversation at the School's dinner-table, as predictable as can be, a few days after the arrival of new guests.

Before I leave this account of our Eastertime in Jerusalem I should tell you the names of our guests for that season. We had Dr. and Mrs. Williams of Chicago. In addition to his interest in the Easter ceremonies, Dr. Williams, who is a dentist, took a keen interest in the bones and skulls being dug up at Jericho. Dr. and Mrs. Lawrence Johnson, Dr. and Mrs. Douglas Chamberlain, Mr. and Mrs. Rife, Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Free and family - this large group in addition to our student body made the School quite a busy place for about two weeks. We had another visit from our President, Dr. Kraeling, and Mrs. Kraeling during their tour of the Middle East. After a stay of more than three months we all sadly said goodbye to Mrs. Ilene Beatty McNulty, who had endeared herself to all of us here. Now with Dhiban under way again, and a large group working down there, the School is a rather quiet place.

Another religious event of the month - if one may call it religious - was the Samaritan Passover. In case I be accused of showing less tolerance and understanding for this religious group than I have advocated above, I may say that this event has become so commercialized and publicized that one has serious doubts whether it has real significance even for the handful of Samaritans that still survive. But it is a ceremony which all should see once, even if they have no desire to see it again. It gives a better picture of what blood-sacrifice entailed in the ancient world than any words of description. The ritual slaughter of only a few sheep gives one an inkling of what the holocausts of the ancient temple of Jerusalem must have been like. Again the excitement, the surging crowds, the chanting, the colourful costumes, the sprinkling and smearing of blood on foreheads and tents, the butchering and presentation of portions to the high priest, the bitter herbs - all this taking place on the side of the great mountain of Gerizim in the twilight and early dark make an unforgettable picture. A large group of our students and guests attended this ceremony also and returned with mixed feelings.

Work at Dhiban began on April 14th, allowing us only a short breathing spell after the completion of Jericho. We have a rather large group working there this spring because we are trying desperately to establish the plan and history of the south-east building and to date the various city walls. Our regular personnel includes our two fellows, Mr. Richardson and Mr. Warren, and also Professor Rolland Wolfe and Father Robert North, our honorary Fellow. Miss Diane Kirkbride, the Jericho tomb

expert, has been carrying out a search for tombs and is busy excavating five Iron Age tombs at present. Mr. Peter Parr is assisting her, also a graduate of the Jericho dig and sites in North Africa. We are lucky that he was available. Our surveyor is Mr. Oliver Unwin and our photographer Vartan Vartanian of Jerusalem. Mr. Keith Andrews of the University of Toronto has been helping us for the last week and Mr. Robert Andry is going down with us again tomorrow. With our household staff of three, we make up quite a large party, but certainly not too large for the work to be done.

Our work on the south-east building has been much complicated and slowed by the discovery of more and more Byzantine tombs in the area, most of which have been robbed and re-used in Arab times. When the excavation of these tombs is added to the deliberate robbing of the walls throughout the centuries, it can be seen that the difficulties in re-constructing the plan of the building are rather great. But at present I think we can state that there was an original Nabataean building which is at present encased within a Roman building. Whether there is also an earlier, pre-Nabataean building is still a possibility, but by no means sure. Work outside the city walls still proceeds in two areas. It was decided to make a sounding in an area cleared during the 1950-51 season outside the great battered stone wall to establish, if possible, its date. We have not yet reached its bottom but it is sure now that whatever the date of its construction, it remained in use throughout Roman and Byzantine times. In the area outside the walls at the south-east corner of the city we are proceeding down through many strata of rubbish, all of which so far date from the very end of the Byzantine period.

We may bring this sounding to a conclusion before reaching the bottom of the wall for the excavation outside this wall ~~last~~ down to bed-rock last spring would seem to make further work here unnecessary. To the north-west and north of our south-east building we are clearing down to the pavement which apparently was contemporary with the Roman period of this construction. Our intention here is to find evidence of the approach to the Roman building, for the entrance must have been from this direction. In this area too we are finding many architectural pieces re-used in later walls, which may help in the reconstruction of the building. The photographing and drawing of all these pieces to scale takes much of our surveyor's and photographer's time.

Our tomb parties have been carrying out another careful survey of the area about the tell. On the hill-side where last spring we discovered our first Iron Age tomb five further tombs were found. The search goes on at the same time as these last are being cleared in the hopes of finding Nabataean tombs.

Dhiban itself is a lovely place to live right now. There are flowers in abundance, the famous black iris, wild gladiola, poppies, anemones and many other kinds which I cannot name nor describe. We have pairs of storks in our fields and young animals of all kinds, tiny wolly donkeys, hardly bigger than dogs, kids and lambs, colts and young camels - all being very shy and lovable. The crops so far are good, but one more rain is badly needed. Without it, the high hopes for a good year may well be blasted.

Our social life at Dhiban is by no means a dead issue either. Quite a strong tie has been established between the American School and these modern Moabites. They drop in on us for coffee and invite us for dinner to their homes. A young and handsome Sheikh of the neighbourhood greeted us on the day of arrival with a whole goat for our first dinner down there. The man who was our host at last autumn's wedding again invited us to a great dinner in his home. But the big event was our invitation to have dinner with Sheikh Dhamin. He is the great-grandson of the man who was buried in the big stone tomb right on top of our south-east building. It was



necessary to move this, and before we could do this we had to discover the closest relative and come to terms with him. The task of doing this was left to our foreman, Jirjis Qubain of es-Salt, who arranged things very skilfully. We invited Sheikh Dhamin to come to discuss the matter. He stayed to dinner with us and we reached the perfectly fair arrangement of preparing another tomb like the one which we wished to move in a place in the cemetery to be designated by the Sheikh. When the new tomb was built he would come and superintend the actual moving of the remains. All was amicably carried out and we became quite friendly. Then he invited us to dinner. We accepted when we discovered that he lived only a few miles away at the bottom of the Wadi Mojib, the great canyon of the Biblical River Arnon. But after we had accepted he said that he would prefer to have us after he moved his tents and household from the Wadi to his summer encampment near Shihan. This place where a famous stele was discovered some years back is south of the Mojib and westward towards the Dead Sea. I had never been there but it seemed a long way to go to dinner. However we had accepted and nothing could be done about it. On the day appointed the Sheikh sent us one of his men to show us the way. We stopped the work early and set off. It took us over three hours driving and walking to reach the site of the new camp. But it was certainly worth it. Here we received true Beduin entertainment. The Sheikh had pitched his special guest tent of goat's hair on a terrace overlooking the descent to the Dead Sea - a very lovely spot. This formed one side of a square. At right angles was a line of smaller tents belonging to his wives and family. Another side also was outlined with tents. The fourth side, opposite the guest tent was left open. At sunset into this enclosure were driven the goats brought in for the night from pasturage. All the young kids, too young to go out with their mothers, were released from their strings and rushed about in the herd looking for their respective mothers, to a mighty baying and mewing. The Sheikh's horse was brought with its young foal running alongside and after being admired by us all was secured to one of the long tent ropes. We were welcomed at a guest tent by the Sheikh, his sons, and other male members of his family. We were seated on cushions and rugs piled up for our comfort and plied with sweet tea and bitter Beduin coffee until the mensaf was ready. This consisted of large platters of rice covered with boiled lamb - the whole moistened with leben and semne. We followed the correct protocol, washed only our right hand, and ate only with our right hand, kneeling about the platters, rolling the rice into balls with the one hand and popping them into our mouths. When we guests had eaten all we could, we relaxed once more on our cushions, had our hands washed and drank more tea and coffee while our hosts ate. Later, by the light of an almost full moon we were conducted back to our cars by several of the tribesmen, picturesquely armed with guns and knives. In our halting Arabic we carried on conversation as best we could and apparently succeeded at least in showing them how much we appreciated their hospitality and enjoyed ourselves. But we were tired by the time we rolled into bed that night about midnight.

Another big event took place this week-end. Young Hussein was crowned King of Jordan yesterday and took the oath in Parliament. Today, Sunday, was the big military tattoo and as this was our day off we drove to Amman for the big affair. We had no tickets but were very fortunate in obtaining seats on the grandstand from which we had a good view of the whole proceedings. But best of all, we were permitted, after the King left, to return to the palace to wander out on the ~~xxxxxxx~~ parade ground and take pictures of the troops. Naturally we concentrated on the colourful cavalry and the famous camel corps, resplendent in scarlet and white. The Royal Circassian guards on white horses and wearing red uniforms ought to flatter our Kodachromes. The parade was a great success. Never have I seen such perfect precision in marching, manoeuvring and saluting. Even horses and camels walked with heads held high, obviously in high fettle and proud of their part in this big event. A more modern aspect was presented by armoured regiments, artillery and infantry, but they could hardly rival such exotic attractions as a camel corps!

Most of our Dhiban group then returned immediately to Dhiban, but a few of us came on to Jerusalem. There is always School work to be done here. But tomorrow morning early we are off to Dhiban again for another week. I hope that by next month's letter I shall be able to give you a fuller report on our work there. Until then I send you greetings from the School in Jerusalem and its personnel.

A.D. Tushingham, Director.